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SUBJECT: BENIN: PROFILES OF NEW MINISTERS

REF: A) Cotonou 494; B) Cotonou 440

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¶1. This is the third in a series of telegrams concerning the newly formed government of President Boni Yayi. Reftel B provided a list of ministers. Reftel A provided profiles of ten new ministers who, along with returning Minister of State in Charge of National Defense N'Douro and Minister of State in Charge of the Economy Koupaki, will be the key interlocutors for the Embassy and USG on policy and program issues in our bilateral relations. This telegram provides profiles of the remaining seven new ministers of the Government of Benin.

MINISTER OF DECENTRALIZATION, LOCAL AUTHORITY AND PLANNING

¶2. Mr. Issa Dmonl Moko is a high ranking civil servant. He served as Prefect of the Department of Mono. Prior to his appointment, he was the Director of the Local Authorities Office (Maison des Collectivités Locales). He is one of the Benin's recognized experts on governmental decentralization issues.

MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

¶3. Ms. Vicentia Bocco is the former Director of President Yayi's electoral campaign and is considered to be one of his close protgs. By profession, she is a radiologist, and is considered to be one of the best radiologists in Benin. Prior to her appointment, she was serving as Chief of Staff in the office of President Yayi. In her first speech, she called for cooperation from the government, the educational sector, and the private sector to advance Benin's economy and social development.

MINISTER OF SECONDARY EDUCATION TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

¶4. Ms. Bernadette Sohoudji Agbossou is a graduate of the University of Montreal in Canada. Prior to her appointment, she taught at the National School for Administration and Magistrates of the University of Abomey Calavi. During a handover ceremony held at the Minister of Education, she said that she would build upon the successes of her predecessor.

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND PROTECTION OF NATURE

15. Ms. Juliette Biau Koudnoukpo is a forestry and water resources engineer by profession. Prior to her appointment, she worked on the Land and Natural Resources Management Program in Cotonou and as a Program Officer at the office of the World Conservation Union (UICN) in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. As a newcomer to politics, she is not well known to the public, but is respected for her technical expertise.

MINISTER-DELEGATE FOR COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN
THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC

16. Mr. Dsir Adadja has a degree in engineering from the Polytechnic School of Montreal, Canada. His specialty is telecommunications, and he was formerly manager of the Regional African Satellite Communications (RASCOM) project that has as its goal the establishment of a satellite communications system for Africa. He also served as Telecommunications and New Technology advisor to President Yayi. Prior to his current appointment, he was the Director of the Benin's telecommunications parastatal, Bnin Telecoms. In his first speech, he noted that the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology has initiated several complex and important projects, and also expressed his commitment to combating fraud and illegal activities in the telecommunications sector.

MINISTER IN CHARGE OF THE RELATIONS WITH INSTITUTIONS, SPOKESMAN OF
THE GOVERNMENT

17. Dr. Alexandre Houtondji is a medical doctor by profession, and has served as Director of Public Health for the Department of Atlantique and Littoral. He was one of the founding members of President Yayi's political alliance "Cowrie Force for an Emerging Benin" (FCBE), and served as the spokesman for this group. As such,

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he frequently appeared on Beninese television and radio explaining and defending the President's position on various issues. In 2006, he also served for a time as President Yayi's Chief of Staff.

MINISTER OF YOUTH, SPORTS AND LEISURE

18. Mr. Ganiou Soglo was born on January 4, 1961 in Paris, and is the youngest son of former President Nicéphore Soglo. He is a business executive and was elected twice as deputy of the National Assembly as a candidate of the political party Renaissance du Bénin (RB), the political party of his father. He ran unsuccessfully for President in the March 2006 election. His appointment was somewhat controversial within the RB, as some resented that fact that former President Soglo proposed his son for this position rather than other candidates some believed were more qualified. He is known to have a passion for soccer, having managed a local soccer team for years. In his first speech, he emphasized the importance of sports and youth activities, and asked for the support of all of Benin's citizens.

WAGONER